

Tip of the



## Prevention Application Information

from the

Western Center for the Application of Prevention  
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### Human Development Theory and Prevention

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Learning about human development theory can enhance the services that preventionists provide to clients by providing the tools to custom fit programs to the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual developmental stages and needs of clients. The Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist Training (SAPST) curriculum created by the Western CAPT contains a module on human development theory (for more information on the SAPST, please contact the Western CAPT). The SAPST covers four developmental theories, including:

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – this theory illustrates a developmental progression based on human needs. Needs are met in a specific order beginning with physiological needs common to all infants, progressing through needs concerning safety, belongingness, esteem, cognitive, and aesthetic needs to self-actualization, meaning the ability to find self-fulfillment and realize one's own potential.

Jean Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Stages – Piaget explores the cognitive stages of development, specifically outlining the difference between concrete thinking based on physical reality, and formal operations which usually, but not always, become possible during adolescence. Formal operations are abstract and deal with the logic of the possible or the hypothetical.

Erik Erikson's Developmental Stages – eight stages demonstrate a series of conflicts associated with particular ages. Erikson's contention was that if people couldn't solve a task at the appropriate stage, they would remain "stuck" on that conceptual problem, with psychological implications throughout their lives.

The Medicine Wheel View of Human Development – this Native American theory symbolically demonstrates a non-linear progression in human development. Each direction on the wheel offers lessons and gifts that help to develop an individual physically, mentally,

emotionally and spiritually throughout the life cycle. Typically, animals, plants, herbs, minerals, etc. are used to demonstrate developmental lessons in a storytelling fashion.

These theories are included in the SAPST, not because they are superior to other theories, but because they are typical academic theories (at least the first three are). In comparing theories, it is important to review the content characteristics and know what questions you want to answer. Theories usually focus on specific issues and have underlying philosophical and methodological convictions. In other words, not all theories seek to answer the same questions or give the same importance to a given question.

To utilize human development theory in your prevention program planning, first identify the target group with which you work and identify the human development theory that best applies to that target group. Next, review your prevention program and identify if the teaching and learning methods, physical activities, tasks, and discussion topics are developmentally appropriate for your target group. Once you have completed these tasks, it will be possible to modify program activities as needed to match the needs of the clients.

Where to look for more information:

Dr. C. George Boeree of the Psychology Department at Shippensburg University, a member of Pennsylvania State's System of Higher Education developed a valuable web site:

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/perscontents.html>. This resource contains biographies and theory information for Abraham Maslow, Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson along with many other theorists. For more information on the Native American Medicine Wheel approach, see *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality* by Michael Bopp, Lee Brown, Phil Lane, Patricia Lucas, and Judie Bopp.

The six regional CAPTs are funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information on this Tip of the CAPT or other WestCAPT services, please visit our web site:

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